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Identical letters dated 3 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Cambodia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 3 March 1999 from Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia, addressed to the Secretary-General relating to the report of the group of experts for Cambodia pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/135 of 12 December 1997 (see annex).

I should be very grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly under agenda item 110, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) OUCH Borith
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Letter dated 3 March 1999 from the Prime Minister of Cambodia addressed to the Secretary-General

I am pleased to acknowledge receipt of the report of group of experts for Cambodia of 18 February 1999, through Ouch Borith, Permanent Representative of Cambodia to the United Nations.

Once again, I wish to draw your attention to my letter and aide-mémoire on an analysis on seeking a formula for bringing top Khmer Rouge leaders to trial, dated 21 January 1999. In it, I called for comprehensive justice for Cambodia and its people and for a full investigation into the crimes committed during the whole period of civil wars in Cambodia from 1970 to 1998.

As you are aware, thanks to the Royal Government of Cambodia's persistent policy and practice of national reconciliation, the Khmer Rouge leaders and its rank and file have totally surrendered, thus a general peace prevails in the country as a whole.

It is quite obvious that peace and national reconciliation are sine qua non conditions for the rehabilitation, socio-economic development and alleviation of poverty of the Cambodian people. As national reconciliation and peace have been achieved throughout the country, the Government is now able to focus its full attention and resources on economic development and improving the living conditions of the Cambodian people.

We have never rejected the accountability of the Khmer Rouge leaders for the crimes of genocide in Cambodia. We just want, however, to caution that any decision to bring the Khmer Rouge leaders to justice must also take into full account Cambodia's need for peace, national reconciliation, rehabilitation and economic development for poverty reduction. Therefore, if improperly and heedlessly conducted, the trials of Khmer Rouge leaders would panic other former Khmer Rouge officers and rank and file, who have already surrendered, into turning back to the jungle and renewing the guerrilla war in Cambodia.

It is needless to say that without peace and security, no development projects can be contemplated or carried out. The decades of war and destruction during the Khmer Rouge rule were more than enough for Cambodia and the Cambodian people. From our most bitter experience in the past, whenever a war breaks out, we are not only unable to find justice for the people, but also unable to protect the people from death.

We are now studying the South African case and the experience of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the objective in mind of dealing with justice for the Cambodian people, peace and national reconciliation.

(Signed) HUN SEN
Prime Minister